

A Guide to Helping Young People to Be Mindful

Teaching young people to be mindful can be challenging. However, once young people start to develop mindful practices, it will become part of their routine and they will begin to see the benefits.

Here are some ideas to help you encourage young people to start being mindful.

Use relaxation breathing techniques.

Sitting calmly and comfortably, help students to focus on their breathing. For example, encourage them to take a deep breath in for the count of three and a slow, full breath out for the count of five. If this is done each day, they will be able to relax more easily and take a break from the stimuli around them.

Use a mindfulness jar.

This can help them to understand that most people can become overwhelmed throughout the day and might need to take some time to stop, relax and then start again. This allows the brain and body to be re-energised and to feel calmer and more in control. This practice will help students make the correct decisions for themselves rather than reacting to a situation or person.

Use mindful texture activities.

Throughout every day, we pick up, hold and use a variety of objects. However, it is not always possible to take the time to think about the texture and characteristics of an object. Taking a few minutes each day to think about how the pen feels in our hand when we are writing, how our jumper feels on our body or how it feels to turn a page in a book can help us to slow down and focus on what we are doing in the present moment. This will help us to stop thinking too much about what has happened in the past and perhaps stop us from worrying about the future.

Use mindful tasting activities.

Again, eating is often done alongside other activities, such as chatting with our friends, walking, doing homework or watching TV. When we take the time to think about what the food in our mouth tastes like, we can appreciate the sensations of the food and understand how our body reacts. Do we enjoy the taste of some foods more than others? Are we eating because we are hungry or bored? Does the food make us feel healthy and strong? Are we full? Having the time to understand the effect of food on our body will help us to keep a healthy weight and eat a balanced, varied diet.



Use an observation challenge outside of the classroom.

Often, young people will play and socialise outside during the school day. They may not notice the birds, the colour of the grass, the way the clouds move, the effect of the wind on the trees, etc. Encouraging young people to answer questions about what they can see, hear and feel will help them to appreciate their surroundings and be more mindful.




Prepare a mindful environment in the classroom.

Creating a calm space for young people to practise mindfulness in will help them learn to take the time to relax and think about what they are feeling. You could model your own mindful behaviour and encourage young people to use the space for a few minutes each day.



Listen to relaxing music.

Calming music can be an effective way to help young people relax mentally, physically and emotionally. Try music without words or use music with an accompanying mindfulness script.



Encourage young people to talk about how they feel when they have used mindfulness.

Sharing experiences can help young people learn to understand that mindfulness is a skill that has lots of benefits for them. Mindfulness should be part of their everyday routine, just like brushing their teeth or getting ready for school.



Use mindfulness colouring sheets.

This activity can help young people to focus on what they are doing now, rather than thinking about the past or the future. Let them think about the design of their picture and use colours as they wish.



Use a gratitude activity.

This encourages young people to spend time thinking about the good things in their life and what they have that makes them happy, healthy and thankful. Often, we move through life saying 'thank you' as more of a reflex than as a true way to show genuine appreciation. Encouraging young people to identify the things in life they are grateful for will help boost their mood and make them more mindful.



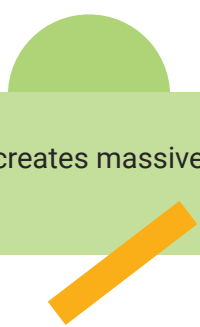
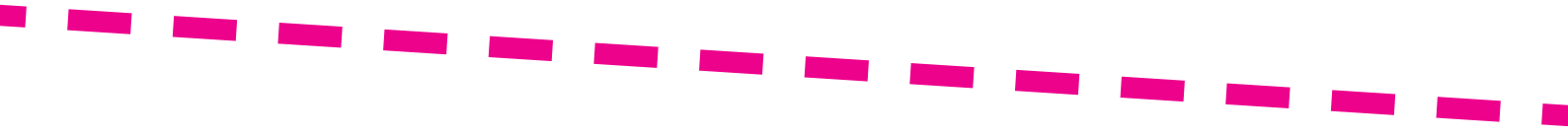
Use mindful affirmations.

These are like positive affirmations. They encourage young people to think about how their body feels when they are most calm, what makes them the happiest and what they are grateful for. Using mindful affirmations each day will help them to think about the present rather than just the past and the future. It will help them to appreciate the present and help them to take time to be calm and re-energised before they move onto the next task in their day.



Share your own mindfulness ideas.

Often, young people prefer doing something that they know works for adults. Listening to what you do and how it makes you feel will help inspire them to try something new and keep them motivated to add it into their daily routine.



Mindfulness should always be used for positive experiences so it becomes rewarding. This creates massive benefits for young people socially, emotionally, mentally, academically and behaviourally.